

Philosophy of life

and other essays

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Self published by

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What is philosophy

In past deep thinking on any subject was considered as philosophy and thinker was called philosopher. Even today researcher on any subject is honored with degree of PhD i.e Doctor of philosophy. However presently thinker of each and every subject is not called philosopher. Thinkers on materialistic subjects such as science, economy, history are called scientist, economist, historian etc. Thinkers on non-materialistic subject such as knowledge itself are called philosopher

What is philosophy of life

Internet search shows following dictionary meaning of philosophy of life,

“Any philosophical view or vision of the nature or purpose of life or of the way that life should be lived. “

Everybody has his/her own philosophy of life . One need not be a philosopher to have a philosophy of life.

One's philosophy of life may not remain constant throughout the life. If a person continues to think on and feeds his/her mind on issues affecting life, he/she keeps on refining his/her philosophy of life.

Hard work and fate

There are two widely prevailing and mutually contradictory views on hard work. One is that however hard you work, you are only going to get whatever is there in your fate. Other one is that 'nothing is impossible'. First view is held by those who are either influenced by eastern religions or who have experienced failures in spite of hard work. Second view is held generally by those who have experienced success.

My views on hard work are somewhat statistical. To me fate is nothing but chance. While people say somebody is born in rich

family by fate, I would say it is so by chance.
Thus it would be more appropriate to say that
hard work doesn't guarantee success, but
improves its chance.

*"All fingers are not alike.
If you stretch smaller ones to make all
equal, it is socialism.
If you cut bigger ones to make all
equal, it is communism.
If you do nothing to make all equal,
it is capitalism. "*

Existence of God

Answer to the question whether God exists depends upon what we mean by God. If what we mean by "God" is a force or mechanism responsible for creation of world and its continuous evolution, then "God" exists. All other attributes being assigned to him are matter of faith.

*"In past people never questioned
existence of God, because they knew
he exists,
In future also they will not,
Because they will know he doesn't.*

Religion

All religions originated with the aim of making the world a better place to live in. Originators and propagators of most of the religions realized that if every body works for self interest only there would be conflict of interests and weaker would suffer more. Hence in most of the religions, any activity which adversely affects others is considered immoral.

The biggest challenge confronting religious heads was how to keep man away from doing immoral things. In most of the religions this challenge was met by taking recourse to the concept of God. God was attributed to be omnipresent, guaranteeing rewards and punishments either in this life itself or in the next life.

Morality

Man's actions are by and large governed by self-interest. Morality is a code of conduct to ensure that our actions are not just governed by self interest, but the interest of other members of the society is also taken into consideration. Morality has relevance only in context of society. No action is moral or immoral for a man living in isolation.

Man's observance to this code of conduct, which we call morality or goodness, partly comes from within himself and partly results from external controls. Whereas taking care of interests of near and dear ones comes from

within, external controls determine as to what extent we take into account interests of other members of society.

*"Poor are poor ,
because
rich are rich"*

Promoting morality

Following are different ways of promoting morality in society,

- a. To make people good so that even the concern for others, apart from near and dear ones, comes from within.
- b. To make them believe that it is in their own ultimate interest to be good to others. This approach is adopted by most of the religions.
- c. To establish regulatory controls so that there is no choice but to act good.

In principle method 'a' is the best, ensuring that goodness comes from within but in practice it has proved to be most difficult method. Method 'b' has been the most successful till now, but with dwindling faith in religion and God this method may not work for long. Now all we can have is method 'c'.

*"Keep controlling morality of others,
yours will get automatically controlled
by others"*

'Why me?' Syndrome

Quite often we see bad things happening to good people and we wonder why it should happen to them. We wonder because somewhere in our mind there is a belief that only good things happen to good people and vice versa. The belief is so strong that it doesn't go in spite of witnessing innumerable examples contradicting it. The belief is outcome of tenets of most of religions. Naturally when bad happens to us, we are not able to see beyond haze of religious conceptions and misconceptions and can't help asking ' Why me?'.

Goodness quotient

Man's goodness can be defined simply as his concern for others. Goodness quotient can be defined as ratio of his concern for others to his total concerns. Goodness is relative. A person is considered good if his goodness is higher than that of an average person in the society.

No body is 100% good. Can we also say that nobody is 0% good ?

*"Mahatma is one whose soul doesn't
rest in peace till
there are tears even in a single eye ."*

Ganpati Bappa Morya

Ganesh Chaturthi is a festival , celebrated in India. On this day idols of Ganesh are installed at homes and public places with gaiety. Idols of Ganesh are bought in processions.

On one such occasion, man, women, girls and boys were dancing on the tune of their favorite music albums shouting slogans ' Ganpati Bappa Morya' in praise of Ganesha. Procession after procession was passing through a street. There were also stray animals on the street witnessing the scene. Perhaps they were wondering what has happened to man ?

Anger

We get angry whenever we find some body acting against our own interest and we are unable to restrain him. May be that although that persons actions are against our interest, they are perfectly serving his own interests.

I have myself gone through such situations several times. In these situations although I continue to restrain other person to best of my abilities, what controls my anger is my belief that at the core everybody is selfish including myself. Thus I see myself and the other person in same boat. Further I believe that it is my bad luck due to which I am suffering from that person. Thus I do not hold him fully responsible for my fate.

Arrogance

Arrogance results from two things. First from capability of successfully managing one's occupation. Secondly from taking full credit for the success.

Of course individual competence is necessary for success but does it account for every thing? If we think so, perhaps we are underestimating contribution of society and our luck factor for what we are.

Man is a social animal.

*Without society he is nothing but
animal.*

*Yet many behave as if they are
self made.*

Purpose of life

Purpose of life is to live purposeful life. But what is purposeful life? For those who are religious, religious life is purposeful life. For those who believe in universal religion and universal God , spiritual life is purposeful life.

According to Christianity, this world is temporary. All pains, pleasures and worldly purpose in this world are temporary. This world is going to end and thereafter God will create a new world, which will be permanent. All those living will die. Those living for Christ will find place in the new world and will live forever. Thus for them purpose of life is to find place in new permanent world.

According to Hinduism one of the four purposes of life is *Moksha*, i.e. freedom from cycle of life and death itself.

According to some thinkers this world is an illusion. For them reality is nothing and nothing is reality. Along with the world, the life, and 'purpose of life' are illusory. When they go through personal tragedies, sometimes even hardcore illusionist's mind may be taken over by emotions and illusory world may appear to be too real to be unreal.

Purpose of life may also keep on changing as we move on in life. For some it changes from worldly to out worldly, for others it may remain worldly throughout the life. Those who are neither aware of any out worldly purpose nor have any significant worldly purpose left to be achieved, life becomes purposeless.

Some people find it difficult to admit that life could also be purposeless. According to them, since God has created life, it can't be purposeless, especially if it is human life.

There are millions and millions who are not able to manage basic necessities of life such as food and shelter. Can they think of any purpose in life? For them is there purpose in living or living is the only purpose? Is the need for purpose is a higher need after basic needs have been met with?

What are the options if to you your life seems to be purposeless? If you find your life purposeless, most probably you are either atheist or agnostic. In that case to you the life of every body else also may also seem to be purposeless. You may take solace in the fact that you are not alone in going through a purposeless life. Even the life of those living apparently purposeful life may appear to you as purposeless as you find their purposes purposeless. To you perhaps life is nothing more than a chemical process. You do not worry about after life. To you life is like an

onion. Peel it off layer by layer at the end you find nothing or life is like a broken pencil, it is pointless.

*In life if you keep complaining about
your fate,
Life may in go in just complaining*

Women's Liberation

In stone age era women were not kept confined to walls and veils because there were neither walls nor veils nor we were civilized enough to feel need of it. Process of civilization had started during stone age. In early stages of civilization we started keeping women behind walls and veils to protect them against yet uncivilized world. The practice of keeping women keeping behind walls and veils continued for thousands of years. This period was so long that we forgot the basic purpose of keeping women behind walls and veils. Instead it became part of culture and tradition. We should realize our folly and liberate women, at least in civilized part of world, form walls and veils

Life of a jeep

Quite often I think our life is like life of a jeep whose driver doesn't know from where he has come and towards what he is heading.

Disappointments, frustrations, failures, illness etc in our life are similar to roadblocks, bumps, twists and turns in path of jeep.

Jeep has to be physically rugged if it has to continue to move. Unlike jeep we have to be not only physically but also emotionally rugged. As rugged jeep only can take care of its passengers, we can take care of our dependents.

"Earn but don't burn"

Meaning of life

A lot of things have been said and written about the meaning of life specially by them whose thinking has been clouded by religious conceptions. There are no rainbows in clear skies. Answer to the question 'what is meaning of life?' depends on whose life and 'meaning to whom' we are talking about. Normally we talk about human life only.

What meaning can be thought of life of plant and animals which are slaughtered daily in millions and trillions to provide food value to human life? So we think only human life can have some meaning.

Yes, our life does have lot of meaning for each other , because our life depends so much on each other. But what about meaning of our life to universe as a whole. Going by our latest scientific knowledge of universe, out of all stars and planets, life exists only on earth. On earth too life was neither there since its beginning nor may last till its end. I think nothing more need to be said about meaning of our life to universe.

*“High thinking and high living
are poles apart”*

My philosophy of life

A theory is considered scientifically correct if real life observations when viewed through that theory , validate the theory rather than leaving believers of theory confused and surprised. Same is true with the philosophy.

I believe that most of what we get in life is a matter of chance . So I don't get surprised by even and odds in my and everybody else's life.

I do not deny free will, but how much free is ' free will' ? For an average person, if you compare things within his control to the things which are beyond control , you may find that things beyond control considerably outweigh things within control. You have little control on

the society and family in which you are born. No doubt there are examples of 'rags to riches' and vice versa , but these are more of exceptions than rule.

"If good can happen, even if we do bad, why bad can't happen even if we do good?"

Epilogue

This booklet is outcome of my reflection on various issues pertaining to life in general. Several unresolved questions still continue to haunt my mind and my effort to resolve them continues.